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Further Information

Andrews & Rebane (1997) *Farming and Wildlife. A practical management handbook*. RSPB, Sandy

Brooks & Agate (2001-2003) *Hedging—a practical handbook*. BTCV. Available online at <http://handbooks.btcv.org.uk/handbooks/index>

CCW (1996) *Hedgerow management and renovation. A guide for land managers*. Countryside Council for Wales, Bangor

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (2002) *Habitat Creation Guide for Lowland Derbyshire*. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Belper

NHLS; *Hedgelaying Explained*. National Hedgelaying Society.

NHLS; *Laying it on the Line*. National Hedgelaying Society video.

The National Hedgelaying Society website provides information on hedge laying and details of hedgelaying contractors and trainers. Hedgelaying courses are also sometimes run in Derbyshire.



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Wildlife Trust



Hedgerows are an important historical feature of the lowland landscape and of great importance for wildlife. Yet hedgerows are a man-made habitat and without regular and ongoing management, each shrub would eventually become a mature tree, grow old and die.

The value of a hedge for wildlife comes from their structure and complexity and much of this value is lost once a hedge becomes a line of mature trees. Hedgerow management can often look destructive, but only by regular laying and trimming of the hedge can the bushy, vigorous growth be maintained.

hedgerow management



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Hedge laying

Hedge laying is a traditional form of management aimed at producing neat, stock-proof barriers. It involves cutting the living stems part way through at the base and then bending them over at an angle, securing them with stakes and, in some regions, binding along the hedge top. Hedgelaying is best undertaken over winter when the plants are dormant.

The way hedges are laid is dependent on local factors such as what animals are kept and climate. As a result many regional or local styles of hedgelaying have been developed and these should be maintained where possible.

Stems suitable for laying are called pleachers and should be grown to at least twice the height of the required laid hedge. If the hedge has been managed by top cutting then the top should be left uncut until it reaches the required height.

For laying purposes the stems should be cut on an angle close to ground level, to promote new growth from the base of the plant and to allow water to run off the remaining stool. All pleachers should be laid so that they slope upwards. This allows sap to travel up the stem and enable continued re-growth in the pleacher. **Always lay hedges uphill on sloping ground.**

If well-laid and regularly trimmed, a hedge should only need laying once every 15-20 years to ensure vigorous growth and maintain internal structure.



Coppicing

Coppicing is an option when it is not possible to restore a hedgerow through laying and planting up. It involves cutting hedgerow shrubs to the ground in order to promote regrowth from the base. The cut should be close to the ground but should leave sufficient height for new shoots to emerge from the remaining stool. The cut should also be clean and angled slightly to allow water to run off.

If shrubs are coppiced too high, the hedge will become gappy. This will cause problems when you come to lay the hedge in the future.

The best species for coppicing are willow, hazel, alder and hawthorn.

Trimming

Trimming keeps hedgerows in good condition for many years in between laying.

Ideally, one side of the hedge should be cut each year, leaving the other untrimmed. This creates a 2-year trimming cycle and helps to ensure a continuous supply of food for wildlife. Only recent growth should be cut, and of that a centimetre or two of last year's growth should be left to ensure that the same wood is not damaged each year.

Trimming a hedgerow into an A-shape, or 'topped' A-shape is particularly beneficial to wildlife, providing good protection.

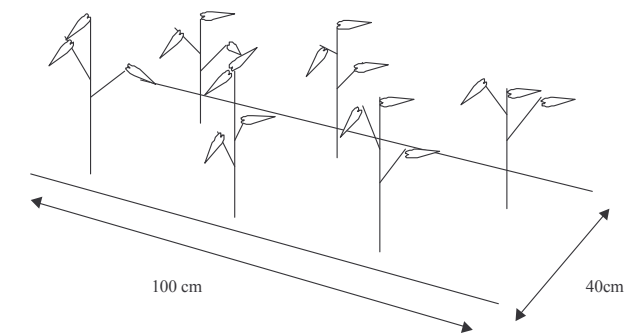
Where possible, hedge trimming should be left until the end of winter. This ensures that food is available to wildlife through the autumn and winter. If this is not possible trimming can be brought forward to earlier in winter.

Hedgerows should not be cut during the bird nesting season (February/ March to October for late nesting species).

Planting and aftercare

Where a hedge has become gappy, it may be advisable to plant new shrubs in the gaps. Planting should take place between November and March, but should not be undertaken when the ground is waterlogged or frozen.

To achieve a thick hedge, planting should be done in double staggered rows, with 6-8 plants per metre. Each plant should be heeled in and kept well watered and weeded throughout the first summer. To reduce the need for watering and weeding, a thick mulch should be applied around the base of the young plants.



Hedges should be replanted using the same species of trees and shrubs already present in the hedge, ensuring that the hedging plants used are native species of English and preferably of local origin.